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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MPOS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY STRESSES IRAQ AND PKK TO VISITING
ARMY COS GEN SCHOOMAKER

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) Summary: Iraq and the PKK dominated US Army Chief of Staff Schoomaker,s meetings in Ankara October 27 with his host Turkish Land Forces Commander Gen. Basbug and with TGS CHOD Gen. Buyukanit. The Turks expressed anxiety about developments in Iraq and possible trends in US policy; complained again about KRG representation in the US-Turkey-Iraq trilateral process on the PKK; and called Kirkuk potential &dynamite8 that could undermine efforts to form a unified, successful Iraq. On Afghanistan, Gen. Buyukanit said Turkey can provide additional forces for ISAF, but any deployment to fight terrorists in the south of the country would require parliamentary approval; he did not repeat earlier arguments that Turkey,s peacekeeping commitments abroad and PKK requirements at home preclude any additional forces. End Summary.

12. (S) On Iraq/the PKK, the Turks emphasized the following points.

-- Iraq,s political unity and territorial integrity are vital to Turkish interests and for the region. Recent developments worry Turkey. Division along sectarian lines will not solve Iraq,s problems and might make them worse. Gen. Basbug complained that Turkey,s advice on Iraq going back to 2002-2003 had been disregarded, including for example on the importance of proportional representation for all the key communities in Iraqi political and security institutions. Nevertheless, Gen. Basbug said, Turkey does not want to see any change in US policy on Iraq (division of the country, premature withdrawal, etc.).

-- The PKK presence in northern Iraq remains a serious problem and source of frustration for this country. Turkey supports Gen. Ralston,s initiative and understands he is very serious about it. But the effort must succeed for the sake of Turkey,s terrorism problem and for the sake of US-Turkish relations; without this, relations will continue to deteriorate, and the damage won't be easily repaired. The PKK problem cannot be resolved in one day, but taking real steps cannot take too much time, either. Gen. Buyukanit said that he wants to come to the US in mid-February (per his invitation from CJCS Gen. Pace) with some results in hand on the PKK. This will enable him to speak more effectively in the US and in Turkey on behalf of US-Turkish relations.

-- Recent US emphasis on military force against the PKK as a &last resort8 had a very negative impact in Turkey. The

military option need not be and understandably will not be a large-scale US ground operation against the PKK, but a range of other actions could be considered -- e.g., seizing a PKK leader, a single air strike, etc. These would have significant and very helpful impact.

-- Gens. Buyukanit and Basbug reiterated their objections to Kurdistan Regional Government representation in US-Turkey-Iraq trilateral talks on the PKK. Buyukanit said the Turkish government had received a formal note from the Baghdad authorities designating a KRG representative to the process (presumably Karim Sinjari). The effect was to turn a tripartite process into a quadripartite one. This was unacceptable, and Turkey has rejected it.

-- Gen. Basbug restated Turkish concerns regarding Kirkuk, calling it &dynamite8 that could aggravate sectarian and other problems within Iraq. He urged postponement of the 2007 referendum and an overall approach to Kirkuk that would reflect broader consensus among all of Iraq,s various communities.

13. (S) On Afghanistan, Gen. Buyukanit reviewed SACEUR,s requests for additional forces to fight in the south and Turkey,s argument that the mandate of ISAF, in which it continues to participate, does not include fighting terrorists. He said Turkey can provide additional forces for ISAF, but extending Turkish fores to fight terrorists would require parliamentary approval here. He added, however, that the situation in Afghanistan is not good and emphasized that NATO must be successful there. Gen. Buyukanit did not repeat arguments he has made previously, including publicly, that the fight against the PKK and other peacekeeping commitments make it impossible to increase Turkey,s Afghanistan commitment, and he clearly said that this is not the

military,s position. In a separate discussion October 28 in Istanbul, Turkish Army 3rd Corps Commander and former commander of ISAF Lt. Gen. Erdagi argued to Gen. Schoomaker that NATO HRF commanders should not be stay-behinds if substantial elements of their headquarters are deployed with ISAF. Erdagi did not address the issue of additional Turkish forces for ISAF.

14. (S) Gen. Schoomaker said that no one in the US has any doubt about Turkey,s concerns regarding the PKK. He had spoken with Gen. Ralston and believes he is approaching his mission in a practical, serious way. Gen. Schoomaker affirmed the US commitment to a unified Iraq; said there is no discussion in official circles about dividing the country; and stressed that we see Iraq also in a broader regional context that must be looked at strategically. He cautioned against over-interpreting electoral season statements and assessments by US political figures on Iraq issues and noted how long it took to fashion the US constitution and political order. Gen. Schoomaker tried three times to turn the conversation to possibilities for Army-to-Army cooperation. Gen. Basbug twice turned the conversation back to the PKK, but later indicated some interest in learning lessons from the US Army,s experience in Iraq. Subsequently at dinner on October 27, Gen. Basbug approached Gen. Schoomaker one-on-one with a much more positive message of serious interest in a range of Army-to-Army activities including education, training and staff talks.

15. (S) In response to the Turkish generals, specific points about the PKK, Ambassador stressed the importance of the Ralston initiative. Gen. Ralston,s step-by-step approach is producing results, including the closure of PKK offices and a GOI statement that the PKK is a terrorist organization -- significant, if imperfect policy changes. We understand that more is needed, and it is essential to support the work of Gens. Ralston and Baser, which holds the promise of changing a negative in our relations into a positive. Regarding the tripartite process, Ambassador said that Gen. Ralston believes he has one counterpart designated by the Iraqi government, al-Waili. Whom the Iraqi government includes within its delegation/group working to support al-Waili on

the PKK is its business. As Gen. Ralston noted on his first visit to Ankara, he believes that some connection with Barzani and the KRG will be important for producing results, but this connection should be through the authorities in Baghdad and definitely not one that turns the effort into a four-party process that includes the KRG in a formal way. In any case, Gen. Ralston wants to work for the time being on a US-Turkey and US-Iraq basis, and no formal trilateral is imminent.

¶6. (C) Comment: The Turkish generals, points to Gen. Schoomaker, especially regarding Iraq and the PKK, foreshadow the approach that TGS DCHOD Gen. Saygun and Gen. Buyukanit himself will take during their respective counterpart visits to the US in mid-November and mid-February. On the overall Iraq problem, the Turks are increasingly uneasy about developments there and rhetoric in the US that could bear negatively our long-term commitment. Saygun and Buyukanit will be seeking a clearer sense of US plans in Iraq and the role that we would like for Turkey to play.

¶7. (U) Gen. Schoomaker cleared this message.

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